



# An Introduction to Nebraska Career Education

*Skills for Lifelong Learning, Earning, and Living*



# Dear Fellow Nebraskan,

Nebraska is taking steps to improve educational opportunity for all our students. The **“Essential Education”** initiative seeks to define what constitutes the opportunity for an excellent, basic education that all K–12 students should have. Thanks to the hard work of members of the State Department of Education, the State School Board, and scores of other Nebraskans, we now have a clear vision for the kind of educational opportunities we need to offer every young person in our state.

We must keep in mind that the purpose of education is to prepare students for successful transitions to lifetimes of learning, earning, and living. It is for that reason that our educational leaders have included Nebraska Career Education, or NCE, as a central part of Essential Education for all our students. Formerly called Career and Technical Education (or Vocational Education), NCE provides comprehensive opportunities for students to develop the skills they need to succeed in the 21st-century economy.

By defining NCE as an essential part of our educational efforts we have embarked on a new and exciting course that I believe will yield enormous benefits for all our students. I look forward with great eagerness to the transformations I believe NCE will bring to Nebraska’s educational system.

On behalf of the Department of Education, I invite you to learn more about NCE by reading this guide. I believe you’ll see that NCE is a critical part of the Essential Education we must offer each and every student.



**Douglas D. Christensen**  
Commissioner of Education



“We must keep in mind that the purpose of education is to prepare students for successful transitions to lifetimes of learning, earning, and living.”

## ■ I N T R O D U C T I O N

# What is Nebraska Career Education?

**N**ebbraska Career Education—or NCE—has a long history of helping students develop the skills they need for the workplace and for life.

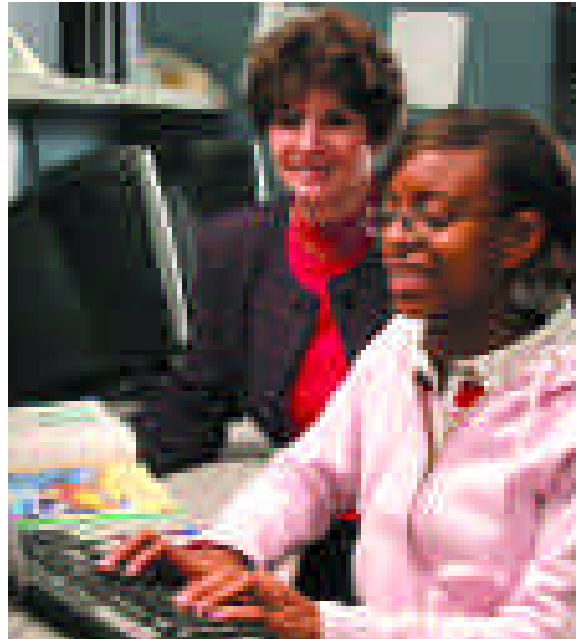
NCE opens up education, takes it out of the classroom, and ties it to students' real-world interests and ambitions for the future. It strengthens the impact of rigorous knowledge-based academics by enlisting them in the cause of relevant career education, creating a totally new unified approach to learning.

The modern workplace demands individuals who have a strong academic foundation and the ability to apply academic and technical skills to a variety of real-world situations. The development and application of these skills does not just happen. The best way to build them is by appealing to each student's unique interests, learning style, and aptitudes. Students are better prepared to make informed career choices if they have the opportunity to explore options during their academic careers, and to experience the workplaces of a variety of careers that may be of interest to them.

NCE is a vital part of the total educational system. It provides equitable opportunities for all students to develop the skills they need to:

- **learn** through career development while meeting academic standards;
- **earn** as productive citizens in a global society; and
- **live** as contributing members of their communities.

As students make the NCE connection, all sorts of good things happen. When they realize the stakes involved in learning, they are motivated to do better in



class. Not surprisingly, students in schools with enhanced career education take and pass higher level math courses than students at schools without career education. In addition, almost two-thirds of high school graduates of career education programs nationwide enter some form of postsecondary education.

In the following pages, you'll learn about the key elements of NCE and meet students, educators, and others who are part of Nebraska's career education system. You'll see

how NCE is truly building skills for lifelong learning, earning, and living.

### ■ NCE: A Snapshot\*

Enrollment in NCE courses, grades 7–12:	88,699
Secondary enrollment increase since 1990:	34%
Career student organization membership:	19,514
NCE community colleges:**	6
Enrollment in NCE courses, grades 13–14:***	47,501
<b>Total NCE enrollment, grades 7–14:</b>	<b>136,200</b>

\*2003–2004 school year, public schools

\*\*Public community colleges with NCE programs eligible for federal funds authorized by the Carl D. Perkins Act

\*\*\*Community colleges only



*Skills for Lifelong  
Learning, Earning,  
and Living*

## N C E I N A C T I O N

# What are the NCE Career Fields?

The diagram on these pages is a visual map of the “career fields” and “career clusters” model that NCE has developed to help students, parents, employers, and those in the educational system

understand how curriculum relates to the career opportunities from which students will choose, and for which schools must prepare them.

This approach is based on a project organized by the U.S. Department of Education. Versions of it are

being considered or are being adopted by each of the 50 states. Nebraska is among the leaders in this initiative. For more information, visit [www.careerclusters.org](http://www.careerclusters.org).

At the center of the model are the core “foundation knowledge and skills” that each student is expected to learn. They are surrounded by six different career fields, and then the 16 different

career clusters. Clusters further break down into “career pathways” (indicated with red dots) and then into a list of more than 500 specific occupations (not shown).

The Nebraska Department of Education is in the process of adopting this model. The transition from the current curriculum design will be lengthy, but it will ultimately benefit students, their families, employers, and, indeed, the entire state.

Nebraska is reorganizing  
career education around  
career fields and clusters.



## Marketing, Sales, and Service

- Buying and Merchandising
- Distribution and Logistics
- e-Marketing
- Management and Entrepreneurship
- Marketing Communications and Promotion
- Marketing Information Management and Research
- Professional Sales and Marketing

## Business, Management, and Administration

- Administrative and Information Support
- Business Analysis
- Business Financial Management and Accounting
- Marketing
- Human Resources
- Management

## Finance

- Banking and Related Services
- Business Financial Management
- Financial and Investment Planning
- Insurance Services

## Hospitality and Tourism

- Lodging
- Recreation, Amusements, and Attractions
- Restaurants and Food and Beverage Services
- Travel and Tourism

## Law, Public Safety, and Security

- Correction Services
- Emergency and Fire Management Services
- Law Enforcement Services
- Legal Services
- Security and Protective Services

## Human Services

- Consumer Services
- Counseling and Mental Health Services
- Early Childhood Development and Services
- Family and Community Services
- Personal Care Services

## Government and Public Administration

- Revenue and Taxation
- Foreign Service
- Governance
- National Security
- Planning
- Public Management and Administration
- Regulation

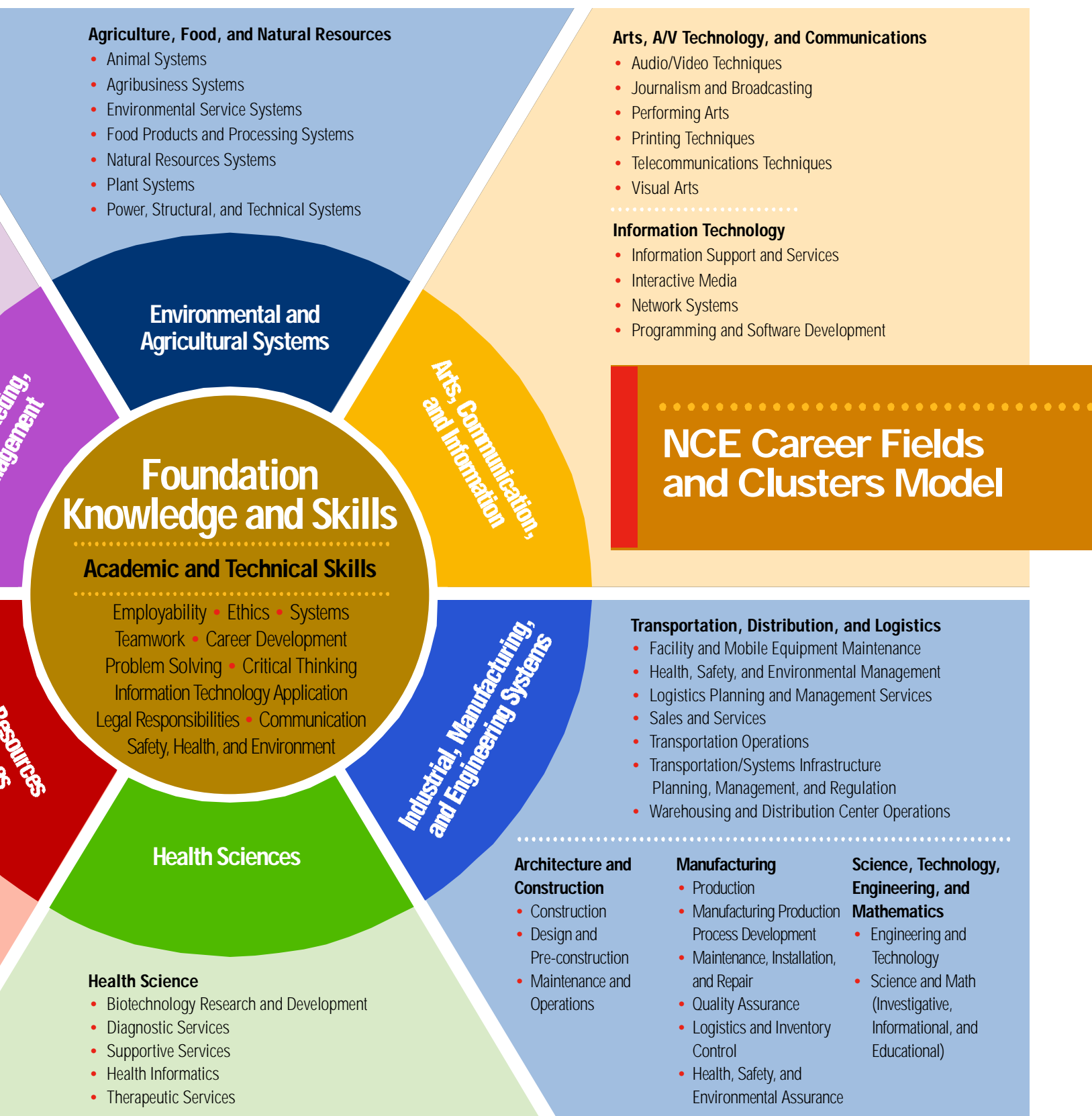
## Education and Training

- Administration and Administrative Support
- Professional Support Services
- Teaching/Training

Business, Management, and Administration

Human Services and Security





## ■ S T E P S   T O   S U C C E S S

# What Grade Levels Does NCE Span?

**N**CE spans all the years of schooling. It begins as early as kindergarten with discussions aimed at building career awareness. It continues in

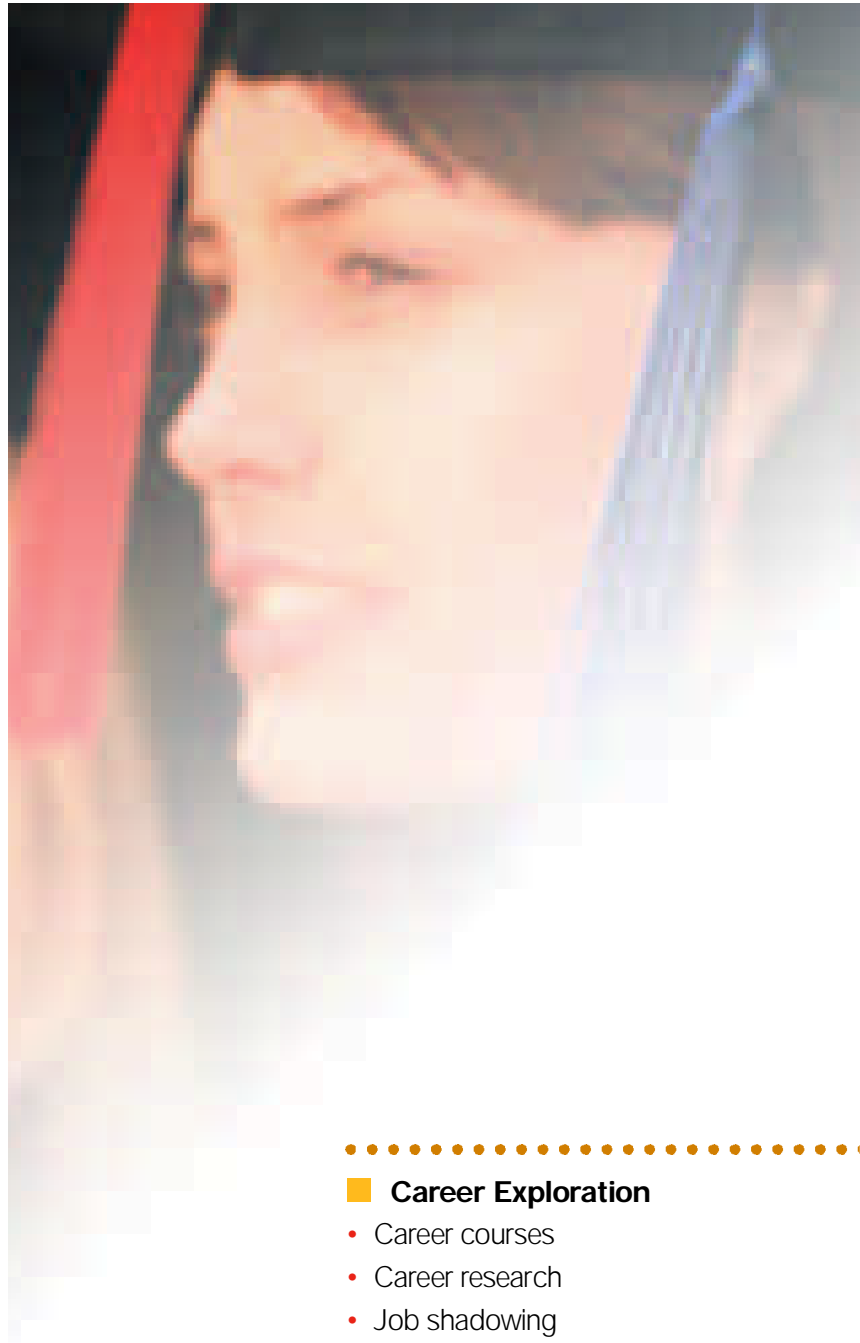
middle school as students explore career options, keeps going through high school as young people prepare for postsecondary education or employment, and carries on through college and into careers. The chart at right shows how it works.



### ■ Role of NCE in School

Ensure that NCE is an integral part of the essential education of Nebraska students through:

- Programs of study based on the Nebraska career fields and 16 career clusters that combine academic and career education curricula
- Contextual learning delivered through a rigorous, relevant curriculum
- Hands-on learning experiences
- World-of-work application of academic and technical skills
- Assessment of academic, technical, and workplace competency knowledge and skill attainment
- Student-led leadership and personal development experiences
- Clear transition from secondary to postsecondary education including advanced placement, dual credit, certification, and associate and/or baccalaureate degrees.



### ■ Career Exploration

- Career courses
- Career research
- Job shadowing
- Individual Career and Education Plans (ICEP)



### ■ Career Awareness

- Introduction to career clusters and career fields
- Career fairs
- Career days
- Classroom guest speakers
- Field trips

# From Kindergarten to Career

## Career

- Successful work life
- Economic viability and contribution to the life of the community
- Ongoing career evaluation and changes facilitated by lifelong learning skills

## Career Applications

- High school "senior experiences"
- Apprenticeships
- Cooperative education
- Internships
- Mentorships
- Part-time work
- Service learning
- Supervised agricultural experiences
- Smooth transitions from secondary to postsecondary education



## Career Preparation

- Career program of study
- Career academies
- Individual Career and Education Plans (ICEPs) revised annually
- Career student organizations
- Workplace readiness classes
- Articulation linking secondary and postsecondary study



Lifelong Learning

Secondary and Postsecondary Education

Middle School

Elementary School

EP)

persistence

## ■ C A R E E R P L A N N I N G

# What is the Role of School Counseling?

**B**y tailoring education to match the talents, inclinations, and potential of individual students, NCE aims to transform schools into places where each student can find his or her individual pathway to success.

As Nebraska schools move toward this new model, school counselors will find themselves at the heart of the process. Where once they might have met with students simply to make sure the students fulfilled all the

requirements for graduation, NCE requires closer, more collaborative relationships. Using tools like the online Nebraska Career Management System, counselors will help students get the information they need to make smart education and career choices.

The centerpiece of the NCE guidance process is the Individual Career and Education Plan

(ICEP). Required of every student entering ninth grade, ICEPs outline students' career goals, the course work they will tackle as they move through their middle and high school years, student organizations they intend to join, extended learning experiences they plan to pursue outside the classroom, and their plans for postsecondary career preparation (see "A Sample ICEP").

ICEPs are not merely blueprints for students' career preparation. Students are required to review and revise their ICEPs each year with input from their school counselors and from their family. This heightens parents'

and guardians' involvement in students' lives and schooling. Also, as ICEPs call for coordination of classroom instruction and out-of-classroom work experiences, teachers find themselves involved with school counselors in finding extended learning experiences for students, and in using classroom instruction to complement and reinforce what happens in the workplace.

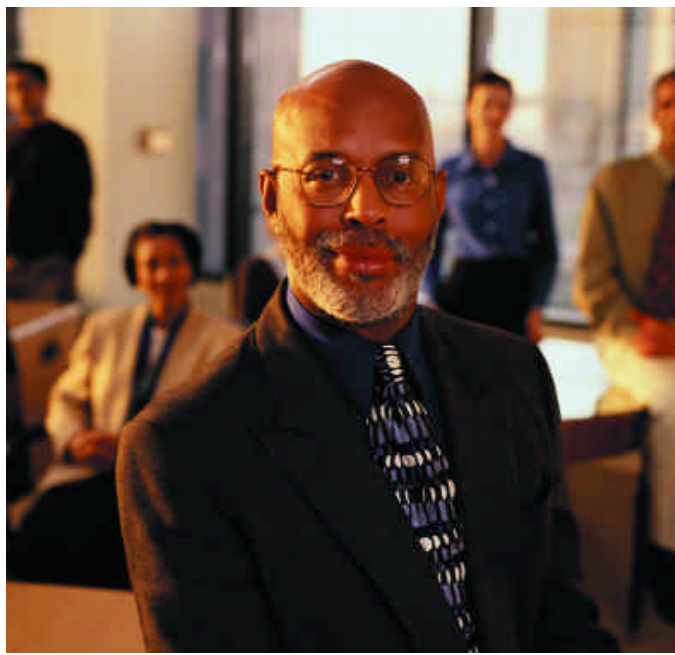
With NCE, school counselors become coordinators at the hub of team efforts to help students build better futures. In effect, counselors are in the empowerment business, and the students end up in control of their educations and their lives.



## ■ Role of the School Counseling Program

Provide a comprehensive school-counseling program based on the three domains of the academic, the career, and the life skills. Counselors also manage the career development process including:

- **Career awareness**
- **Career exploration**
- **Career planning/preparation**
- **Career application**





# A Sample ICEP

All Individual Career Education Plans (ICEPs) include a plan for career preparation featuring high school course work, extended learning experiences, and participation in student organizations. The sample ICEP below includes classes leading to completion of a two-year associate's

degree, as well as listings of possible four-year and graduate degrees. Actual course listings vary from school to school; specific high school and postsecondary offerings should be consulted for complete degree requirements and course listings.

## Individual Career Education Plan

**Name:** Taylor Jones

**School:** West High School

**Career Field:** Industrial, Manufacturing, and Engineering Systems

**Career Cluster:** Architecture and Construction

**Postsecondary Goals:** Associate's Degree in Design and Pre-construction with possible further study toward a bachelor's or graduate degree

High School Schedule					Associate's Degree Program in Design & Pre-construction	Bachelor's & Graduate Degree Programs
	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12		
<b>English</b>	English 1	English 2	English 3	English 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Required English</li> <li>Required math</li> <li>Required science</li> <li>Required social science</li> <li>Fundamentals of Drafting</li> <li>Materials for Manufacturing and Construction</li> <li>Mechanics of Materials</li> <li>Reinforced Concrete Design</li> <li>Construction Estimating</li> <li>Construction Blueprint Reading</li> <li>Design 1, 2, 3</li> <li>Drawing 1, 2, 3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Required English</li> <li>Required math</li> <li>Required science</li> <li>Required social science</li> <li>Architecture</li> <li>Landscape Architecture</li> <li>Surveying</li> <li>Urban Planning</li> <li>Civil Engineering</li> <li>Structural Engineering</li> </ul>
<b>Math</b>	Algebra 1	Geometry	Algebra 2	Trigonometry		
<b>Science</b>	Physical Science	Biology	Chemistry	Physics		
<b>Social Science</b>	American History	World History	Economics	Am. Government		
<b>Other</b>	Physical Education	Art	World Language	World Language		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nebraska Career Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Computer Aided Drafting</li> <li>Principles of Technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technology Engineering Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Architectural Drafting</li> <li>Construction and Maintenance Trades</li> </ul>		

**Extracurricular High School Activities:** SkillsUSA, football, baseball, class officer, band

**Extended Learning Opportunities:** Job shadowing, internship, cooperative education, apprenticeship, and part-time employment

Student and Parent, Wayne  
State College, Wayne

## ■ Ryan and Emily Becker

**R**yan Becker, a sophomore pre-medical student majoring in chemistry at Wayne State in Wayne, views career education as a voyage of discovery with potentially huge pay-offs. “If you don’t like a career you’re investigating, you can always back out of it; but if you find you love it, then you have an advantage,” he says.

A member of FFA (see “What are NCE Student Organizations?” page 10) since the eighth grade, Becker got so involved in the agricultural student organization that he rose to the office of statewide vice-president, serving in that capacity through April of his freshman year of college.

“Being a state officer prepared me for anything that might come up in the real world,” Becker says. “I’ve

learned skills for leadership, personal growth, time management, and organization. I’ve presented workshops all over the state at different FFA conventions. I’ve had to talk in front of 4,000 people.”

Becker’s mother Emily proudly agrees. “Career education has matured Ryan because it’s gotten him out in the world. It’s made his good leadership skills even better. I believe career education makes people better overall by building practical skills and a better understanding of life values.”

Ryan’s high school did not offer a health sciences program, but the FFA was a horizon-broadening experience entirely relevant to his plans to become a physician. “Career education prepares you for college and for your major,” he says, “because it opens your eyes to all the different opportunities that life can offer.”



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—Ryan Becker

# intelligeNCE

## ■ A F T E R   H I G H   S C H O O L

# What is Postsecondary's Role?

**N**CE doesn't stop with high school graduation. Because learning is a lifelong process, Nebraska has taken steps to ensure that high school students can easily make the transition to two-year college, four-year college, the military, or other postsecondary education they need to reach their goals.

More than 60 percent of Nebraska high schools have "articulation" agreements with postsecondary institutions. These allow students to take sequences of courses beginning in high school and continuing at two- or four-year colleges without having to repeat material already mastered.

For example, one kind of articulation is the dual-credit agreement. It enables students to take courses in high school and receive high school and postsecondary credit simultaneously. Credit for courses is recorded at students' high schools, and when they move on to

college the credit for the equivalent college courses is waiting for them on their new college transcripts.

Articulation moves NCE toward the ideal of a system of schools that acts like one big school, with course work so coordinated that students can move from high school to college as easily as moving for one grade to the next. NCE's tech prep system already has set up career pathways that lead seamlessly from high school to

advanced study at Nebraska's six community colleges (see "Nebraska's Community Colleges"). Every year more than 35,000 Nebraska high school students take advantage of these career pathways.

### ■ Nebraska Community Colleges\*

- Central Community College
- Metropolitan Community College
- Mid-Plains Community College
- Northeast Community College
- Southeast Community College
- Western Community College

\* Public community colleges with NCE programs eligible for federal funds authorized by the Carl D. Perkins Act



## ■ CAREER CONNECTIONS

# What are NCE Student Organizations?

**M**ore than 19,000 students in Nebraska middle schools, high schools, colleges, and universities take part in career student organizations (CSOs) with others who share their career interests. CSOs put students in contact with teachers and businesspeople from their chosen career areas and let them practice the leadership, employability, and technical skills they'll need for success. The experience is fun and can lead to lifetime relationships with future professional colleagues. Nebraska CSOs include:

### **DECA: An Association of Marketing Students**

More than 2,000 Nebraska students participate in DECA. The organization's objective is to develop future leaders in marketing, management, and entrepreneurship through its competitive events and scholarship programs.

### **Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA)**

Bringing business and education together in a positive working relationship, FBLA provides students with the skills needed to successfully compete in the job market, pursue further education, or manage personal skills. More than 5,000 FBLA members benefit from leadership development, community involvement, and business partnerships.

### **Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA)**

This association of family and consumer sciences has the family as its central focus. FCCLA offers more than 4,000 members the opportunity to expand their leadership potential and develop skills for life—planning, goal setting, problem solving, decision making, and interpersonal communication—necessary in the home and workplace.

### **Health Occupations**

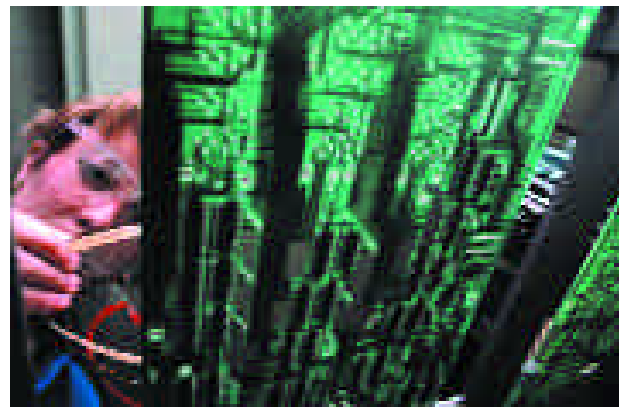
#### **Students of America (HOSA)**

HOSA holds annual leadership conferences at the national and state levels that feature competition in nearly 50

healthcare skills. HOSA views the activities of high school chapters as extensions of classroom healthcare education.

### **Nebraska FFA Association**

Some 6,500 middle and high school students in Nebraska take part in FFA, which is dedicated to developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education.



### **SkillsUSA Nebraska**

SkillsUSA is a partnership of students, teachers, and industry representatives working together to ensure America has a skilled workforce. Activities in local chapters revolve around preparation for competitions in a broad range of leadership and career skills.



## ■ CSO Opportunities

Nebraska CSOs provide students with opportunities to:

- develop and practice their leadership skills
- become involved in community service opportunities
- develop employability skills such as problem-solving, decision-making, team work, accepting responsibility, and follow-through with assigned tasks
- develop job seeking skills such as developing a resume, interviewing, and performance review skills
- explore majors and occupations in their career pathways.



Student and Parent  
Lakeview High School, Columbus

## Rachel and Robbin Chin

**A**t the Chin household in Columbus, career education runs in the family. Rachel, a junior at Lakeview High School, Columbus, got involved in the school's Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) chapter because of the good experience her older sister, Elizabeth, had with the organization.

"Elizabeth was in FBLA four years," says Rachel's mother, Robbin, "and competed at the national level in FBLA's business skills competition. She is a sophomore now at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and is interested in a research career in biology."

While her sister pursues a future in science, Rachel is deciding between a career as a broadcast journalist or restaurateur. She believes the skills FBLA teaches are applicable in all walks of life. "I go to FBLA workshops on leadership and they motivate me to do it myself," says Rachel. "I come back thinking about how I can put what I've

learned into practice in my projects at school."

Events at FBLA competitions include everything from spelling to keyboarding to business law and business math. At the FBLA state conference in the spring of 2004, Rachel placed first in impromptu speaking, earning her a trip to FBLA's national competition in Denver that summer. "It's pretty prestigious to get to the national conference," says Lakeview FBLA sponsor Jan Went.

Robbin says her daughter has always been interested in public speaking, but adds that Rachel's love of cooking attracts her to the idea of opening her own restaurant. Rachel herself seems ready for any challenge. "I think running my own business would be fun," Rachel says. "I like doing things and making them turn out right." With her experience in FBLA under her belt, she adds, "I definitely could handle it."



"I go to FBLA workshops on leadership and they motivate me to do it myself. I come back thinking about how I can put what I've learned into practice in my projects at school."

—Rachel Chin

Relevance

## Jennifer Sand

I think businesspeople in Nebraska see the importance of students being better equipped for the workforce,” says Jennifer Sand of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City’s Omaha branch. As the branch’s public affairs coordinator, Sand says that businesspeople contributing to career education is just a matter of enlightened self-interest. “They want kids to be better prepared,” she says. “They’re searching for people with general analytical skills, basic computer skills, and good writing skills. Businesses also value basic job skills such as promptness, courtesy, and proper dress.”

That’s why Sand and the Omaha Federal Reserve branch have gotten directly involved in local NCE programs. “The district bank supports economic education, with the goal of increasing financial literacy,” Sand says. “We provide resources to teachers and work with a number of colleges in the area that provide summer graduate classes for high school teachers.

“We’re also involved in the Academy of Finance in six local high schools,” she adds. Operating as “a school within a school,” the Academy of Finance introduces students to career opportunities in the finance industry. “It’s a national program run by the National Academy Foundation with academies in some 700 schools around the country,” Sand explains. She has been a member of the local corporate board of directors for the Academy of Finance for five years and has chaired the board for the last two years.

Career education is for all students, Sand believes, because it puts them to work building their own futures. “Students in a career pathway such as the Academy of Finance perform better in all their other classes. They have better comprehension, better grades, and better graduation rates than the general student population, because they are engaged in something in which they’re really interested.”



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—Jennifer Sand

## ■ C A R E E R E X P E R I E N C E

# How Does Extended Learning Work?

**T**he connection NCE makes with life as it is lived in the world of work is what makes it different and exciting. The ties between what happens today in the schools and what happens to students when they enter the workforce are most directly demonstrated when schools send their students into local workplaces to learn.

One of the pillars of NCE is the idea that the best way to get high school students to consider their real-life future is to give them a taste of it right now. This includes “senior experiences,” which are enrichment programs that let high school seniors jump start their academic and career preparation by taking technical advanced placement courses, doing internships, or otherwise capping off their education careers.



Extended learning is not limited to upperclassmen, however. It can be done at any grade level, and it can take a variety of forms depending on students’ needs and what local businesses are able to do. NCE treats these extended activities not as extracurricular sidelines to the business of schooling, but as central elements of career-oriented education. The different types of extended learning commonly available in Nebraska include:

## Cooperative Education

This is an arrangement in which teachers coordinate classroom instruction with students’ part-time work in the field. Students spend part of the day at school and part of the day on the job honing their career skills.

## Apprenticeships

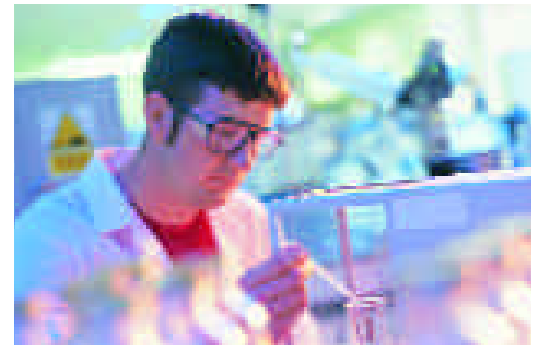
Apprenticeships are on-the-job training coordinated with courses of academic study leading to certified mastery of particular skills. Certification can lead directly to employment, or may be part of a larger strategy of building a set of certified skills to take to the workplace.

## Job Shadowing

Job shadowing is an experience in which students seeking a better understanding of particular jobs follow experienced workers through the course of a workday. Each year in February, National Groundhog Job Shadow Day gives thousands of middle and high school students the opportunity to explore career options.

## Internships

Internships are part-time, on-the-job learning experiences that reinforce classroom instruction. Interns can experience a career from the inside, and



sometimes parlay the experience into full-time employment.

## Mentoring

Mentoring establishes long-term relationships between students and mentors in businesses designed to teach good work habits, work ethics, and other foundational skills. These “soft skills” are as important as technical proficiency in landing and holding a job.

## Service Learning

Volunteer service projects give students useful work experience while benefiting the community. Many students, for example, have been involved in service learning while building homes for Habitat for Humanity, raising funds for charitable organizations, or other community service projects.



## ■ A D U L T L E A R N I N G

# How Does Workforce Development Fit?

**N**CE is part of a broad partnership that also provides career education and counseling to adults. Through Nebraska Workforce Development (NWD), the state operates 21 one-stop Career Centers across the state dedicated to helping workers find the job training and employment services they need.

The partnership between NCE and NWD is a natural one. Not only are both efforts essentially concerned with education, but both also regard education as a tool to help people lead more satisfying, productive working

lives. Both efforts recognize that teaching marketable skills creates the workforce Nebraska needs to maintain a healthy economy.

Created under the federal Workforce Investment Act, one-stop centers offer basic employment services to all Nebraskans as a lifetime community resource. Counselors are available to assess workers' talents and needs and help them look for and land jobs.

Workers who can't find employment receive more intensive counseling and assistance, and job training is provided if necessary.

The one-stop center system brings together members of the state and local communities with a stake in career education. The 47-member Nebraska Workforce

Investment Board that oversees NWD statewide consists of representatives of business and organizations with expertise in workforce development, including CEOs of community colleges. Local workforce investment boards coordinate the operation of the one-stop centers and identify providers of training services, usually local colleges.

Community partnerships provide a model for future NCE alliances. For example, the Workforce Development Institute at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha partners with business and industry to provide their employees with customized on-site training, retraining, and professional development.

With NCE, the concept of workforce development in the state covers not only the training and placement of adult workers, but the career awareness, exploration, and preparation activities of Nebraska students as well.

## ■ Economic Development Links

NCE is also a powerful tool for economic development statewide and locally. An educated workforce leads directly to increased business activity in the form of new and expanding companies, greater profits, and higher productivity. The Nebraska Department of Economic Development has identified these industries for expansion:

- Aerospace
- Agribusiness
- Biotechnology
- Financial Services
- Food Processing
- Health Sciences
- Industrial Manufacturing and Engineering Systems
- Information Technologies and Software Development
- Insurance
- Transportation and Logistics





County Commissioner,  
Douglas County

## ■ Chris Rodgers

Chris Rodgers talks a lot about getting players to the table, and, as a county commissioner in Douglas County, he sits at a pretty big table. In his former job as an assistant to Omaha mayor Mike Fahey, Rodgers worked on issues ranging from public schools and workforce development to housing and mass transit.

It's no surprise that Rodgers, who also serves as treasurer of the board of governors of Omaha's Metropolitan Community College, believes career education works best when all sectors of the community are involved. "When I became a member of the community college board, we were right in the middle of things," he says. "We reached down to the high schools and up to the four-year colleges and spread out to serve all parts of the community. I got interested in building coalitions with business and industry to get things done."

Metropolitan's Workforce Development Institute partners with the business community to train and retrain workers on the job. Rodgers believes career

education at all levels, whether it is job retraining or career exploration in middle schools, is about opening possibilities for students.

"There needs to be a whole different idea of what is acceptable in education," he says. "People still think everyone needs to go to college. Parents need to understand that a student can go to a community college for two years to get the technical skills they need to get a good job, but they can still go on to a four-year degree after that if they want. They haven't lost anything, and they've saved money on their first two years of school."

Elected a county commissioner in 2004, Rodgers expects to remain involved in workforce development and increase his involvement with the public schools. "Working with the school districts, we can prepare students with the career skills, problem-solving skills, and the work ethic they need to succeed," he says.



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—Chris Rodgers

diligence

Family and Consumer  
Sciences Teacher,  
Kearney High  
School, Kearney

## ■ Kathy Gifford

Career education is education for life,” says Kathy Gifford. A family and consumer sciences teacher at Kearney High School in Kearney with 31 years of teaching under her belt, Gifford has dedicated her life to career education. She believes it is important for everyone.

“Career education exists to educate students about the possibilities for their adult life,” Gifford says. She thinks college-bound students often need that kind of direction as much or more so than others. “Scoring well on the ACT is just one tiny aspect of whether or not a student will be successful in life. Those kids who are going to college don’t always know what they want to do with that degree. If they take career courses, they can see how science, say, is applied in real jobs so they might get an idea of what direction their life should take.

“Career education makes connections between core knowledge and how it applies to the work world,” she continues, “between what students learn and what they can do with it after they graduate. It makes school more meaningful.”

Gifford says there’s more to career education, though, than just learning specific skills for a specific occupation.

“Sometimes,” she says, “the ‘soft’ skills—teamwork, punctuality, attendance—are more important than the actual job skills. Career education teaches flexibility and skills that can be applied to many situations.”

Gifford adds that career education requires that schools show the same responsiveness to changing times. The schools need to make sure they’re training students for jobs that actually exist in the community. That means a close partnership between schools and businesses is essential.

“This is our message to businesses,” Gifford says. “We want to work with you to make education more meaningful for kids. We need you, and you need us.”



“Career education makes connections between core knowledge and how it applies to the work world, between what students learn and what they can do with it after they graduate. It makes school more meaningful.”

—Kathy Gifford

## ■ EVERYONE BENEFITS

# Who Wins With NCE?

**T**he benefits of NCE are designed to spread from schools and students across families and communities until they bring positive change to the entire state. Here's how everybody wins with NCE.

### Students Win

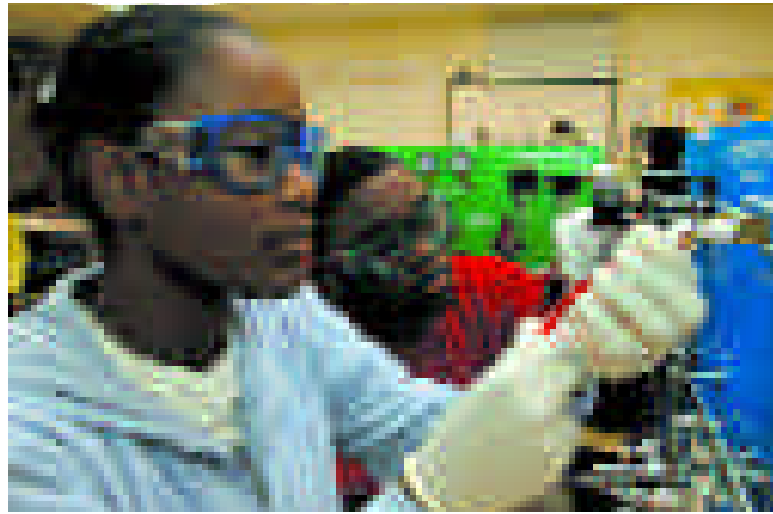
By starting with an assessment of each student's goals and crafting an education with those personal objectives in mind, NCE creates customized pathways to success that combine rigorous academic instruction with career education relevant to each student's needs. Whether those pathways lead through community college, on-the-job training, a four-year college, or on to graduate school, NCE gives students the tools they need to build their futures.

### Parents Win

NCE involves parents in new and effective ways in the preparation of their children for success in life. By seeking their participation in the design and annual review of their children's Individual Career and Education Plans (ICEPs), NCE puts them at the table as their children chart their futures. Parents can make sure their children get the best education possible, both in terms of academic excellence as well as practical preparation for real life.

### Educators Win

NCE revitalizes education by connecting schools with the life of the community. Teachers forge closer ties with students as they help them form and execute their personal plans for success. School counselors find increased professional satisfaction as they carry out the essential task of career counseling. Principals and administrators have new opportunities to build



community partnerships as schools set up extended learning in local businesses and seek guidance on local workforce needs.

### Employers Win

NCE aims to ensure that business and industry have a highly educated pool of people from which to hire. By focusing students on career options early, NCE allows young people the time to pick and choose the right careers for them. It introduces them to the real world of work with rigorous and relevant on-the-job experiences such as internships, cooperative education, and service learning. The result is that graduates entering the workforce are ready to contribute to their organizations right away.

### Communities Win

NCE builds schools that are better able to serve the workforce needs of the local community. By producing graduates with first-rate skills and excellent work habits, schools maximize their effectiveness as engines of local economic development.

excellence



## Nebraska Career Education

Nebraska Department of Education

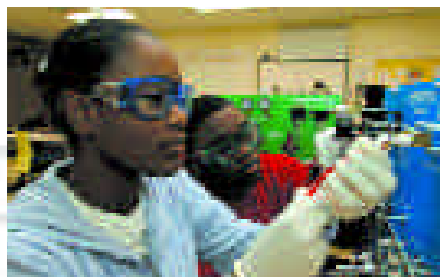
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and Living*